

ATLANTIC REGION FORMS CLINICAL-TRIAL NETWORK

A regional network of researchers has been established in Atlantic Canada in an attempt to attract more funding for clinical-trial research in the region. The Clinical Trials Atlantic Network (CTAC) is a collaborative effort of federal and provincial governments, industry, the academic community and health institutions. It will coordinate and promote clinical-trial research and attempt to attract research dollars from Canadian and multinational pharmaceutical companies. CTAC is expected to generate \$48.8 million in funding for research over the next 4 years, create approximately 50 jobs and help keep quality researchers in the region.

FAMILY LIFE, COMMUNICATION INFLUENCE SUBSTANCE USE: STUDY

A recent Addiction Research Foundation study indicates that the quality of family life and parent-child communication play an important role in preventing substance use among adolescents. The study, based on the responses of 2057 Ontario students in grades 7, 9, 11 and 13, examined the links between aspects of family life and smoking, heavy drinking, marijuana use, other illicit drug use, delinquency, and drinking and driving.

Young people who lived with both natural parents had the lowest incidence for all six behaviours, while those living with neither natural parent were at the greatest risk. Data showed a strong link between students' family lives and delinquency,

heavy drinking and the use of marijuana and other illicit drugs. Factors in family life that influenced young people included the amount of time parents spend with their children and parents' efforts to keep track of where their children are and what they are doing. Students who regularly talked over problems with their parents had the lowest rate of delinquency, and those who never talked with parents about problems were at greatest risk for heavy drinking, illicit drug use and delinquency.

NEW EDITION OF BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BIOETHICS NOW AVAILABLE

The Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University, Washington, has published the world's most comprehensive published citation source for literature about the ethical, legal and public-policy aspects of health care and biomedical research. Volume 20 of the *Bibliography of Bioethics* has 811 pages and 3600 references on topics such as AIDS, cloning, confidentiality, euthanasia, gene therapy, organ or tissue donation, and human experimentation. The volume costs \$60 (US); for information, call 202 687-6689.

NEW TREATMENT FOR CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME SHOWS PROMISE

University of Toronto researchers say a new therapy for carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) that employs red and infrared light emitted at specific frequencies and wavelengths shows great

promise. Scientists reported recently that they had achieved a significant cure rate in 21 patients with chronic CTS by employing low-energy photon therapy. Photons were applied to the skin for periods of 3 to 10 minutes, with treatments provided 3 times per week for 5 to 10 weeks, depending on the severity of the condition. Fifteen of the 21 patients experienced complete symptom relief that was confirmed in follow-up visits up to 18 months later.

A repetitive-strain injury, CTS is becoming increasingly prevalent in the high-stress, fast-paced computer age. Symptoms can include severe swelling of hands, cold hands, impaired grip strength and decreased ability to move fingers. Conventional treatments range from anti-inflammatory medications and corticosteroid injections to surgery. Researchers say their next step will be to conduct double-blind trials to verify the results.

NAME CHANGE FOR GROUP REPRESENTING GAY, LESBIAN MDs

Effective Jan. 1, the American Association of Physicians for Human Rights will be known as the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA). Officials say the new name for the organization, which has 1600 members in the US and Canada, more accurately reflects the mission of the 13-year-old San Francisco-based association.

A survey conducted for the association in 1994 found that 59% of members experience professional discrimination because of their sexual orientation. In addition to working to maximize the quality of health services for lesbian,

gay and bisexual people, GLMA promotes civil rights and attempts to foster a professional climate in which its members do not face discrimination. For information, call 415 255-4547.

ONTARIO RELEASES NEW ABORIGINAL HEALTH POLICY

The Ontario government has released a new policy on aboriginal health that takes a holistic, long-term and community-based approach to addressing family violence and the poor health status of aboriginal people. The policy is a component of an Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy that was announced in June 1994.

The Ministry of Health will earmark \$2 million in 1994-95 for programs and services, increasing that amount to a total of \$20 million over 5 years. Among other things, the money will fund 10 new aboriginal primary care centres and train aboriginal health workers to provide education, workshops, referrals and prevention programming. It will also fund new aboriginal hostels in Kenora, Timmins and Toronto, and five substance-abuse treatment centres and healing lodges.

SIX PHYSICIANS NAMED TO ORDER OF CANADA IN 1994

Six Canadian physicians were awarded the Order of Canada during 1994 in recognition of humanitarian and medical work in Canada or overseas. Member awards were presented to Dr. Terence Fellows of West Vancouver, formerly in emergency medicine in Inuvik, NWT; Dr. F. Marguerite Hill, honorary staff physician at Women's College Hospital and professor emeritus at the University of Toronto; Dr. Calvin Stiller, chief of the Multi-Organ Transplant Service at University Hospital, London, Ont.; and Dr. Wah-Jun Tze, head of the Division of Endocrinology at BC Children's Hospital, Vancouver.

Two physicians were named Officers of the Order. Dr. Helen Huston, a family physician affiliated with the multid denominational United Mission to Nepal for nearly 40 years, founded a hospital in the Himalayas and established a training program for medical support staff. Recently retired, she now lives in Edmonton. Dr. John Munro Ross of St. John's was the first chairman of the Department of Family Practice, and later director of continuing medical education, at Memorial University in St. John's. He recently spent 5 years in Uganda training primary care physicians. He retired in August 1994.

CANADIAN SMOKING WARNINGS "NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN IGNORE"

Blunt black-and-white health-warning labels on the top half of cigarette packages sold in Canada have caught the attention of American antismoking advocates. A recent edition of the American Medical Association's *American Medical News* said a recent Institute of Medicine report on tobacco and youth cited Canada's "more potent health warnings and noted the failure of US warnings to communicate current and comprehensive health-risk information in an effective way."

Cigarette packs sold in the US must carry warnings from the surgeon general, but they are not as blunt and are smaller than the new Canadian labels. Dr. Thomas Houston, the AMA's director of preventive medicine and public health, said the Canadian labels are "not something you can ignore, like the American warnings . . . [there is] none of this beating around the bush. If we're going to have them, let's [be direct and] to the point." Not all antitobacco advocates support tougher labels, however. Writing recently in the *New York Times*, the president of the American Council on Science and Health said warning labels protect tobacco companies from being sued suc-

cessfully by victims of smoking-related diseases because they warn of the health risks posed by smoking.

NONMEDICAL REPRESENTATIVE JOINS SOGC COUNCIL

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) has become the first Canadian medical organization to appoint a nonmedical representative to the board of its council. Janet MacMillan, vice-president of McArthur Thompson & Law Advertising and Public Affairs in Halifax, has been appointed to the council and currently serves on its newly formed ethics committee.

Dr. André Lalonde, the SOGC's executive vice-president, is confident the society will benefit from her experience and interest in women's health issues. MacMillan is a member of the Board of Directors of Grace Maternity Hospital, Halifax, and chairs the hospital's public-relations committee.

RESTRICT TOBACCO SALES TO LIQUOR STORES, SAY BC PHYSICIANS

Concerned that children are still able to purchase tobacco products with little difficulty, British Columbia physicians have called for stricter regulation of tobacco sales. In a motion put forward by the British Columbia Medical Association's (BCMA) Council on Health Promotion and approved by the Board of Directors, physicians asked that all tobacco in the province be sold in liquor stores within 5 years. In areas where there is no liquor store within 50 km, an alternative source of tobacco sales should be authorized.

The BCMA also recommended that the government adopt a province-wide smoking ban in all indoor public places. The association said that second-hand tobacco smoke can place nonsmokers at considerable risk.